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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the existence and direction of any change in reading standards of pupils in England and Wales between 1987 and 1991. The Reading Ability Series Test A was completed by two independent samples (comprised of 2170 pupils in 61 schools) of Year 3 pupils aged seven to eight years in the spring of 1991. The first sample consisted of pupils from a randomly selected, nationally representative group of schools in England. The second sample comprised schools in England and Wales that had taken part in the initial standardization exercise in 1987. Results indicated that there had been a decline in overall performance from 1987 to 1991, but there was some indication that the decline in performance in response to the more difficult questions in the test (those relating to narrative texts) was greater than that on questions relating to expository text. Other data on reading performance suggest that a decline began in the mid-80s--a decline perhaps attributable to changes in home and school contexts. Other factors which have been mentioned by teachers as possibly associated with reading performance include the teachers' industrial dispute in the mid-80s and the heavy workload on teachers due to the implementation of the National Curriculum. (One figure of data is included; 23 references are attached.) (RS)

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